

U.S. NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO Monthly Update

MARCH 2005

Volume I, Issue 2



U.S. Department of State



International Organizations Bureau



Comments from the Executive Director

The past few weeks have been very busy for UNESCO-related events in the United States.

First Lady Laura Bush highlighted a day-long conference entitled *Calling Higher Education to a Higher Calling* co-sponsored by Georgetown University and UNESCO. Also speaking at the conference were: U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, U.S. Ambassador to UNESCO Louise Oliver, Georgetown University President Jack DeGioia and incoming UNESCO Assistant Director General for Education Peter Smith.

Additionally, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) had its annual conference with a symposium on the U.S. reentry to UNESCO, in which the UNESCO Assistant Director General for Natural Science Walter Erdelen was a panel member.

UNESCO Director General Koichiro Matsuura spent a busy few days in America, participating at the conference at Georgetown, signing a memorandum of agreement with NASA, attending a series of Washington meetings, including a lunch on Capitol Hill, and helping to launch the [Decade of Education for Sustainable Development](#) at the U.N. in New York.

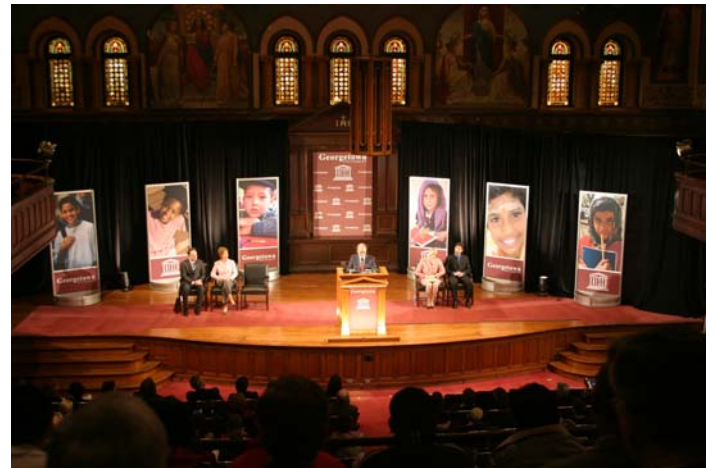
The U.S. National Commission for UNESCO is focused on activating the four subject area committees and the executive board and holding an annual meeting in several months.



Education

The intersection of U.S. Higher Education and [Education for All](#) was the focus of a conference

convened by Georgetown University and UNESCO on February 28. Dr. John DeGioia, the President of Georgetown and the coordinator of the education committee of the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO, hosted and opened the conference. Following remarks from Koichiro Matsuura, the Director-General of UNESCO, First Lady Laura Bush gave the keynote address to the opening plenary.



UNESCO Director General Koichiro Matsuura addresses the audience. (photo A.Zemek)

Mrs. Bush praised UNESCO's work in support of Education for All (EFA) and acknowledged, "With so much respect around the globe, American colleges and universities have a unique opportunity to help UNESCO meet its goals of advancing literacy, training teachers and using education and science to fight HIV/AIDS." She added that "the U.S. is eager to share the benefits of [our] research with UNESCO," and to learn from others around the world.

Connecting sound research and policy, Mrs. Bush noted the relationship between a child's success in learning and the mother's education level. "Mother and child literacy should be at the heart of our efforts to increase literacy around the world," she stated.

Mrs. Bush commended the efforts of the [U.S. Reach Out and Read](#) program in helping to realize EFA here

at home, and recognized the important work of countries like Oman that have made great progress in teaching children and adults how to read.

Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings remarked that the objectives of EFA have special resonance in the U.S. as they reflect the goals of our own education reform effort, [No Child Left Behind \(NCLB\)](#). She thanked UNESCO for leading the way in the international community and emphasized that education quality is key to success. “Education and literacy are necessities in a world devoid of certainty but abundant with opportunity,” she said. “Lives can be transformed, lifted over time from poverty and chaos to dignity and independence. Education offers a ladder on which to climb and a foundation upon which to stand.”

Secretary Spellings recognized the tremendous contribution that the U.S. higher education community can make on an effort such as EFA. She suggested that, by working in partnership with others, much greater challenges could be overcome. “We want to encourage more colleges and universities to apply their research to real-world challenges,” she said. “We want to see new partnerships formed between nations, the business community and non-governmental organizations like the Red Cross and Red Crescent. The more people behind this effort, the more people in need we can help.” She applauded the work of Georgetown and other universities that have made a demonstrated commitment to advancing the goals of UNESCO.

Noting that there have been great achievements in education in the past twenty years, Secretary Spellings insisted that the international community has much yet to accomplish. She stated clearly the critical importance of learning to read, connecting literacy to the ability of individuals to fully participate and to exercise rights in any community. “Like freedom,” she said, “a quality education is worth fighting for.”

Director General Matsuura remarked that the international effort to achieve EFA is “by far and away the highest priority on the world’s education agenda.” He impressed the great value that the U.S. education community can bring to EFA and noted that UNESCO is ready to facilitate this partnership. He welcomed the opportunity to host this conference

with Georgetown and challenged U.S. higher education community to make the goals of EFA their own. “The key outcome I see is your commitment, expressed in actions and programs, to help developing countries overcome the obstacles they face in the area of basic education,” he said. “I believe that the vibrant civil society of the United States – the only superpower, a country that has built its progress on educational foundations – can do more, much more, to help less fortunate countries achieve their educational goals.”



(photo A.Zemek)

The conference included an additional plenary session on EFA, in which the appointed Assistant Director General for

Education for UNESCO, Peter Smith, addressed the audience. Four breakout discussions featured panelists from UNESCO, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, and a variety of leaders and scholars in international education and literacy. The sessions focused on the involvement of the private sector; achieving the goals of the UN Literacy Decade; linking higher education and EFA; and the measurement and challenges to achieving EFA goals. The conference concluded with a final plenary session on next steps forward. More information about this conference is available on [Georgetown University’s website](#) and a webcast will be available soon.



[InterConnections 21](#), a U.S.-based not-for-profit organization, hosted the Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet) members in its first meeting since the U.S. rejoined UNESCO on January 28-30. [ASPnet](#) is one of UNESCO’s longest-standing education programs.

The ASPnet program began 52 years ago by linking a small number of K-12 schools to work together to improve quality education and to explore the ethical and international dimensions of education. The network now includes over 7,500 schools in 175



ASPnet

the UNESCO curriculum, "World Heritage in Young Hands" in the U.S. and to provide an opportunity for U.S. educators and students to explore the relevance of this curriculum in U.S. classrooms. The World Heritage curriculum is already in use in more than 130 countries and has been translated into more than 20 languages. The conference included an introduction to the World Heritage program, led by officials from UNESCO's World Heritage Center and the [International Affairs Office of the U.S. National Parks Service](#). Participants had the opportunity to tour Independence Hall, itself a World Heritage Site, and learn how heritage sites may fit into education in the classroom.

Representatives from the National Commissions of Canada, Mexico, Sweden and the UNESCO regional office in Jordan attended and answered questions about the implementation of ASPnet in their respective countries. The conference also included a discussion on state education standards in social studies and on implementation of the World Heritage in Young Hands material in U.S. classrooms.

Organizations with an interest in seeing the World Heritage education initiative move forward, including two organizations that serve on the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO, the National Geographic Society and the UN Foundation, told attendees they would begin discussions on how to promote the use of World Heritage sites as learning tools in the classroom, as well as how to help ASPnet grow beyond its approximately 30 school reach.



Since the spring of 2004, the United States has participated in a UNESCO-OECD joint initiative to develop non-binding written guidelines for quality provision in cross border higher education. UNESCO and the OECD have convened several meetings of

countries. InterConnections 21 has been the coordinating organization for the ASPnet program in the United States since 1997.

The primary goal of the conference was to launch

government officials and education specialists on this topic, most recently in January 2005.

A major impetus for the project was to assist students in becoming better informed "consumers" of higher education offered by foreign providers and to help protect them from disreputable or low quality providers. The project is also related to the recent inclusion of educational services under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

More information on the [draft Guidelines on Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education](#) is available through the OECD website.



Science

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Acting Administrator Fred Gregory and UNESCO Director-General Koichiro Matsuura signed on March 1, 2005, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) during a ceremony at NASA Headquarters in Washington before an interagency audience of officials and diplomats. "This is a tremendous opportunity for NASA to broaden the impact of our innovations in remote sensing and Earth system science research," Gregory said. "Our partnership with UNESCO is one in which we are very proud, especially as it comes on the heels of last month's Third Global Earth Observation Summit," he added.



(source: NASA)

The MOA expands the long-standing relationship between [NASA](#) and UNESCO begun in the early 1960s. Both agencies have played integral roles in development of the ten-year implementation plan to create the Global Earth Observation System of Systems, adopted by 60 countries last month at the Third Global Earth Observation Summit in Brussels, Belgium. Past collaborations with UNESCO include NASA's Global Hydrology and Climate Center and the [GLOBE education program](#), a NASA led partnership with the National Science Foundation, U.S. State Department, colleges, universities, and non-government

organizations in the U.S. and more than 100 other countries which focuses on extending the benefits of NASA Earth science research.

The focus of the new MOA is to promote improved global conservation through increased utilization of NASA Earth science research and remote sensing data acquired by instruments on aircraft and satellites. The MOA calls for expanded cooperative partnerships in education, sharing of NASA data products, and validation of remotely sensed data by field measurements. NASA and UNESCO also hope to extend existing partnerships to train teachers in UNESCO-member states. The goal is to train teachers in the use of NASA's educational materials developed for traditional classroom teaching environments, then have teachers work with UNESCO's [Natural World Heritage Site](#) managers to conduct collaborative conservation program activities that incorporate the use of NASA earth science data.

One of the first projects under the new MOA will focus on the application of synthetic aperture radar acquired over World Heritage and biosphere sites in several Latin American



Image of Costa Rican terrain.
(source: NASA)

countries during March 2004. The synthetic aperture radar data, which were collected by the NASA AIRSAR airborne system, has previously proved to be extremely useful for mapping archeological sites and for extracting biogeophysical information in forested areas. This agreement will simultaneously support education, culture, and science objectives at UNESCO.



The American Academy for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) hosted a symposium on U.S. reentry to UNESCO and the opportunities available for the U.S. science community to contribute to the Organization's work.



The symposium was part of the [AAAS annual conference](#), held in Washington DC February 17-21.

In the opening address, U.S. Permanent Representative to UNESCO, Ambassador Louise Oliver, remarked on UNESCO's role as the "intellectual organization of the UN system." She welcomed the opportunity to work with the U.S. scientific community and members of the National Commission to support UNESCO's objectives.

Ambassador Oliver noted several UNESCO's priorities, in which the U.S. also has a strong interest, including: literacy, potable water, basic sciences and the preservation of cultural artifacts. She also emphasized the U.S. commitment to assist UNESCO in focused, disciplined reform, adding "all [UNESCO] programs must be top quality."

Ambassador Oliver encouraged greater numbers of the U.S. academic and civil society to become active in UNESCO's work through the U.S. National Commission, adding, "the National Commission is an inclusive body. There will be many opportunities for non-Members to participate."

UNESCO's Assistant Director General for the Natural Sciences, Dr. Walter Erdelen, said, "the scientific environment has changed significantly in the recent past."

New interdisciplinary efforts, such as bioethics, the explosion of scientific knowledge, and the use of new technologies for research and communication will shape scientists' work in new and changing ways.



Walter Erdelen, flanked by Terry Garcia and Louise Oliver, answers a question during the panel discussion. (photo A.Zemek)

UNESCO has responded by strengthening programs in key priority areas. Dr. Erdelen said "water and associated ecosystems are the principal priority of the Natural Sciences Sector, followed by capacity building, oceans, disaster response and renewable energy." He also reported that the Natural Sciences sector has identified areas of possible intersectoral

collaboration within UNESCO, including science, technology and mathematics education.

Dr. Shirley Malcolm of AAAS addressed opportunities, including science and mathematics content within education programs at UNESCO. "We must incorporate science in subjects that are being taught while maintaining that science should be a subject on its own," she said. Dr. Malcolm suggested including scientists in basic education programs, and stressed the importance of consistent coordination between the fields of education and those of science, technology and mathematics.

Dr. Bruce Alberts of the National Academies of Science challenged the scientific community to "make a science out of sustainable development by encouraging objective comparative studies of ongoing [development] projects with similar aims." He encouraged U.S. scientists to work with UNESCO to make scientific knowledge a public good, and to help all countries build merit-based institutions focused on scientific study and research.

Mr. Terry Garcia of the National Geographic Society described the critical role of culture in helping to define and understand human history. Scientific innovation has accelerated anthropological study, he said, by developing technologies such as ground penetrating radar, which has helped to uncover new human remains near the current site of the great pyramids in Egypt. He encouraged the U.S. to play an active role in promoting and reclaiming objects and places of cultural heritage, adding that "tourism has the potential for being a significant force in the protection of a place."



Communications and Information

UNESCO continues to act as a spokesman for freedom of expression and press freedom in the UN system. UNESCO officials stressed press freedom concerns in a series of speeches to the 2nd Preparatory Conference of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva in February.

UNESCO's assistant director general for communication and Information, Abdul Waheed Khan told the Geneva PrepCom: "The press meets

barriers on the Internet that would not and should not be accepted in traditional media, and is often trapped between opposing national laws and definitions. Free media are essential in creating development and prosperity and in upholding democratic societies and should be hindered neither on a local nor on a global level. As a general principle, Internet media should be provided the same freedoms as print and broadcast media."

Khan also recalled UNESCO backing for a major international conference in late November of journalists from Africa and the Arab world in Marrakech, Morocco, to set the stage for the second phase of the WSIS in Tunis in November 2005. Khan approvingly quoted the Declaration of Marrakech's call "to move from the promise of Article 19 [of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on freedom of expression and press freedom] to its universal implementation." He also cited the call in Marrakech for media using Internet be "afforded the same freedom of expression protections as traditional media."

Khan reminded the Geneva meeting of the Marrakech Declaration's position on the most delicate issue before WSIS: "Internet governance should not be a pretext to regulate Internet content and of news and opinion. In particular, security considerations and the demands of the battle against crime, including terrorism, should not imperil freedom of expression and press freedom. Internet Service Providers should not be held liable for the content of the messages they carry."

His colleague Mogens Schmidt, deputy assistant director general for communication and information, told the Geneva meeting that UNESCO "fully endorses" the Marrakech Declaration and considers that the "Internet is a major opportunity to improve free flow of information and ideas throughout the world."

The US Delegation to the PrepCom also called for reaffirmation of Article 19, avoidance of "overly prescriptive or burdensome regulation" of Internet, and "continued private sector leadership."

The US position was contested by Cuba, which threatened "to make many proposals" if the US persists, including reintroducing the radical calls for

a restrictive "New World Information and Communication Order" - a major issue over which the US and Britain left UNESCO for more than a decade.

In advance of the Geneva meeting, UNESCO held a conference in Paris Feb. 3-4 on "[Freedom of Expression in Cyberspace.](#)" UNESCO Director General Koichiro Matsuura opened that conference by saying: "There is a very real risk that security measures may, directly or indirectly, undermine the very principles and rights, including freedom of expression, that terrorism seeks to destroy. It is dangerous to establish rules for the free flow of information. Not only does it hinder the free flow of ideas and opinions, but it may also force 'unwanted' ideas to be expressed underground only, making it impossible to openly counter hate speech and propaganda with informed arguments."

Matsuura said it is probably the simplicity of Internet use for ordinary citizens, coupled with its speed and global reach "that has made many governments worry about granting Internet users the same right to freedom of expression as the print and broadcast media have in democratic societies." He added, "It does not make any sense to speak about an Information Society, not to mention Knowledge Societies, without free and unhindered access to information and knowledge in all forms and in all media."

"I am particularly proud," the Director General said, "that UNESCO, in conjunction with other organizations and associations, worked so hard before and during the Geneva session [of the first WSIS summit] to ensure that freedom of expression was recognized as an essential foundation of the Information Society. The question now is how to turn that principled commitment into practical reality."

US speakers at the UNESCO conference included Prof. Jane Kirtley, Director of the University of Minnesota's Silha Center for the Study of Media Ethics and Law, and former longtime head of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, and Ronald Koven, European Representative of the World Press Freedom Committee. Another featured speaker was Geoffrey Robertson, a leading British media lawyer who represents Dow Jones in press freedom

cases abroad. He proposed a set of legal principles to protect press freedom on the Internet.

Other pre-Summit meetings the UNESCO Communication Sector plan include "ICT for Capacity Building: Critical Success Factors" at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, with the Club of Rome, May 11-13.



Culture

The second intergovernmental negotiating session for the UNESCO draft convention on the protection of the diversity of cultural contents and artistic expressions was held from January 31 – February 12. During this negotiating session, Member States broke into working groups to address some of the remaining issues of the convention. Issues discussed during this session included the use of the term "goods and services" to refer to cultural objects and activities; the question of whether it is appropriate to use the terms "protect" or "protection" in the convention; and the issue of how the convention can best be used to promote culture in developing societies, particularly in situations where local cultures are threatened or vulnerable.

Despite good progress on these issues, no final language was agreed at this session. Additionally, there are a few other issues that have not yet been discussed in-depth by Member States, including the relationship of the draft convention to other international agreements. At the end of this two-week session, Member States agreed that the chair of the plenary should take the lead on drafting the next text. This text will likely include some language that has been reviewed by the drafting group or the working groups, but none of this language has been agreed by the plenary. This text is expected out some time before the April meeting of the UNESCO Executive Board. A third intergovernmental negotiating session is scheduled for May 23 – June 4.



Job Vacancies

There are a variety of positions open in the UNESCO organization including: translators, general service, and professional posts. Professional posts (P) range from

junior professionals P-1/P-2, to middle-ranking professionals P-3/P-4, to management professionals and directors P-5 and D-1/D-2.

Some positions listed on UNESCO's website <http://recrutweb.unesco.org/> include:

- Reviser, Sector for Administration (P-4) (Paris) (closing date: 3 Apr. '05; French fluency required)
- Information Technology Specialist, Institute for Statistics (P-3) (Montreal) (closing date: 31 Mar. '05)
- Editorial and Rights Specialist, Bureau of Public Information (P-3) (Paris) (closing date: 3 Apr. '05)



UNESCO Prizes

Every year, UNESCO confers a number of prizes to individuals and associations all over the world. Each UNESCO pillar, Education, Natural Sciences, Social and Human Sciences, Culture, and Communication and Information, has its own prizes. Each prize awards accomplishments that strengthen and exemplify one or many of UNESCO's goals.

National Commissions often nominate individuals or organizations from their respective countries to receive particular prizes. We are currently working with the Permanent Mission to UNESCO in Paris to set up a mechanism through which the National Commission can nominate individuals. More information will soon be available on our website. Two prizes with upcoming deadlines are listed below.

The UNESCO/Emir of Kuwait Prize for Research and Training in Special Needs Education for Children.

A biannual prize to reward individuals, groups, organizations or specialized centers that have distinguished themselves through outstanding research or training that has helped to improve education for children with special needs. Deadline: March 31.

The UNESCO International Music Council Prize

An annual prize to reward musicians or musical institutions whose works or activities have contributed to the enrichment and development of music, having served peace and understanding between people and international cooperation. Deadline: April 15.

A full list of [UNESCO prizes](#) can be found at UNESCO's website.

